

# American Library in New Delhi Celebrates 60 Years

By RANJANA BHATNAGAR

The American Library in New Delhi began rather modestly. It opened its doors in November 1946 on Queensway, now known as Janpath. There were no formal members, only a small reading room for up to 24 visitors with access to 3,000 books. In 1951 membership was introduced and books became available for loan. Over the years, the library gradually expanded in size, holdings and popularity, necessitating a move to 24 Kasturba Gandhi Marg. When that building became too small, it was torn down to allow building of the current American Center, containing the Library, which was occupied in February 1974. During the construction the Library operated from Bahawalpur House. For most of the 1990s and until recently, the Library was known as the American Information Resource Center. American Libraries were opened in Calcutta in 1943, Mumbai in 1944 and in Chennai in 1947.

Today, 60 years since its establishment, the fully automated American Library in New Delhi offers a state-of-the-art system for rapid information retrieval and online and CD-ROM databases with access to approximately 10,000 full text journals. It also offers 16,000 books and 150 print periodicals on a variety of subjects including law, computers, management, trade, international relations, governance and American literature.

The Library has planned commemorative events during the 2006-07

academic year. Audio books and new collections on science fiction, sports, agricultural biotechnology, nuclear energy and English as a second language have been added to mark the anniversary.

The library is also now open on Saturdays, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., in addition to the regular hours of 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Another new offering is the two-tier membership plan. Patrons who would like to use the Internet, use workstations with Microsoft applications, borrow books, CD-ROMs and videos are offered Gold Card Membership for a modest annual fee. Patrons who simply wish to leaf through periodicals and books occasionally, view videos in house and enjoy the comfort of a modern research facility can enroll in no-fee memberships. Audio books are a great attraction for Gold Members, especially those who live or work far away and like to listen to a book rather than read one. There is also an excellent new collection of management DVDs.

Given the high premium the United States and India place on information technology, the Library prides itself on quickly getting members the data they need, whether it's on life and culture in the United States or the latest developments in



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*The American Library in the 1960s (top) and the present library (above). The library's stock has grown from 3,000 books to include 16,000 books, 150 periodicals and online and CD-ROM databases.*

world events. Library offerings also include book and article discussions, screenings of literary films and orientation programs. Whether one is a student, teacher, government official, researcher, business person or working professional, all receive VIP treatment from a team of dedicated and professional reference librarians. Library staff not only advise patrons, but provide bibliographies of articles and books on specific topics of research, making maximum use of U.S. Embassy-purchased online databases such as Ebsco, Factiva, Galenet, Lexis-Nexus and Proquest.

Since 1946, the Library has built a solid reputation as a trendsetter and model institution.

The American Library feels an obligation toward those who do not have easy access to information and education, and makes special efforts to introduce its facilities to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Its staff regularly visit schools and universities, and teachers bring their classes to the Library. Beyond information and education, the American Library serves as a window to the United States and a meeting place for scholars from both countries. Offering a balanced ambience where serious research occurs side by side with budding friendships, the Library will continue to build bridges of understanding. 

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